

1.6 OUTDOOR DINING

(Author: GT)

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION*That Council:*

- 1) *Notes the Victorian Government's Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package will provide \$87.5 million to Councils and businesses outside of Melbourne's CBD to make widespread outdoor dining safe, practical and a reality this summer.*
- 2) *Notes funding of up to \$500,000 will be available to local Councils to help them implement swift and streamlined permit, enforcement and monitoring processes to support expanded outdoor dining*
- 3) *Notes officers have established the Getting Ready for Enhanced Outdoor Dining project and have commenced the process of engaging with traders and identifying opportunities where outdoor dining can be expanded in a range of settings*
- 4) *Notes that Council has not yet charged footpath trading fees in the current financial year as trading has not been allowed, and that, in light of announcements and providing stimulus in line with the Victorian Government's Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package footpath trading fees (\$210k) for the 20/21 financial year will not be charged.*
- 5) *Notes that dependant on the demand for increased trading across the Municipality, Council may need to request additional financial assistance from the State Government to facilitate further trading opportunities and/or allocate further budget as may be required.*

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Government's Outdoor Eating and Entertainment Package will provide \$87.5 million to Councils and businesses outside of Melbourne's CBD to make widespread outdoor dining safe, practical and a reality this summer.

As part of the package, funding of \$29.5 million will be provided to local Councils to help them implement swift and streamlined permit, monitoring and enforcement processes to support expanded outdoor dining as pandemic restrictions ease.

Metropolitan Councils will be eligible for grants of up to \$500,000 in assistance and this money can be passed on to businesses in the form of reducing or waiving permit fees or invested in infrastructure such as streetscaping and lighting to facilitate increased outdoor trading.

DISCUSSION

The State Government has announced plans to encourage Councils and traders to work together to make more space available for outdoor dining. It is intended to do this in some areas currently set aside for roadways and parking.

The timelines to deliver these opportunities are very tight with an expectation that additional spaces are available, even in a most basic form, by 26 October 2020. The Getting Ready for Enhanced Outdoor Dining project has therefore been initiated to deliver enhanced outdoor dining through a coordinated approach given the many stakeholders involved and the roles they play.

There are many urban design considerations in optimising streetscapes and outdoor dining spaces and it is therefore envisaged that outdoor dining areas will be continuously improved beyond the basic form in which they may first be rolled out.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

At present the Footpath Trading and Access policy provides the framework on how footpath trading should be managed in normal times. The use of roadways, parking bays and other spaces is not anticipated in the policy but it will provide some guidance on a range of matters associated with safety and amenity.

CONSULTATION

Officers have written to all relevant hospitality businesses, including those who currently trade on footpaths, alerting them to the assistance package and inviting them to contact Council to express their interest about how outdoor dining might be enhanced for them.

As options are developed consultation will occur with other traders who might be affected and this work will be mostly carried out by our Place Making and Economic Development Teams.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The adopted 2020/21 budget accounts for reduction in footpath trading permit fee revenue as a result of restrictions to trading and anticipates income of \$210k (around 50% less than previous years). To date the majority of footpath trading permits have been renewed however no charge has yet

been applied, as trading has been unable to commence so far this financial year.

The Council grants of up to \$500,000 can be passed on to businesses in the form of reducing or waiving permit fees or invested in infrastructure such as streetscaping and lighting.

Whilst there is still work to be done to fully understand the costs it can be anticipated that the grant funding will likely be absorbed by associated infrastructure costs to facilitate trading. It may be that further funds are required to be spent to facilitate increased trading opportunities dependant on the take up of increased trading opportunities across the Municipality.

Nonetheless, the Victorian Government is waiving a range of fees associated with hospitality business and it follows that a similar approach should be adopted by Council. It is therefore intended to waive footpath trading fees for the remainder of the financial year and forego the \$210k income that might otherwise been expected.

CONCLUSION

The State Government has announced plans to encourage Councils and traders to work together to make more space available for outdoor dining. It is intended to do this in some areas currently set aside for roadways and parking.

A project has been initiated to ensure a coordinated approach in the delivery of enhanced outdoor dining opportunities and officers have started the process of engaging with traders.

Footpath trading fees will not be charged this financial year and in doing so Council will forego \$210k that would otherwise be generated in revenue.